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ABSTRACT

As technology continues to increase the complexity of our occupational society and relationships between education and work become closer and closer, it becomes necessary to create for youth a world in which educational institutions and the business/industrial community collaborate to provide an environment, a set of learning experiences, and a set of opportunities for helping all persons in our society. The career education movement represents this kind of environment. Career education's primary focus is on increasing the ability of individuals to recognize and capitalize on relationships between education and work in our society. It places equal emphasis on society's need for work and the individual's need to find meaning and meaningfulness in his work. There are several areas of societal and individual need to consider within the framework of career development: the current rapidity of occupational change demands that both youth and adults be equipped with adaptability skills (basic academic skills and good work habits); each student needs one or more sets of specific vocational skills that can be used to gain entry into today's labor market; and career decision-making skills are absolutely essential in a society that worships freedom of choice for each individual. (Author/PR)

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THE LINKAGE OF EDUCATION WITH THE
WORLD OF WORK AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

CE

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Introduction

Technology continues to increase the complexity of our occupational society. It is not simply a matter of the increasingly rapid rate at which new occupations are created. Rather, it also involves recognition of the fact that these newer occupations require more skills and knowledge. As a result, the demand for unskilled labor diminishes each year. Relationships between education and work become closer and closer. We all know this to be true. Yet, both educators and the business-labor-industry community have failed to act constructively in accommodating to this fact. Instead, both have tended to blame those least responsible for this condition - namely, the youth who leave our educational institutions for the world of paid employment. When we tire of blaming youth, we blame each other. In either event, our youth continue to suffer.

Our educational institutions have operated, for years, under a false assumption that the best way to prepare youth for the world of work is to lock them up in a schoolhouse and keep them away from that world. The business-labor-industry community has operated under a false assumption that responsibility for readying youth for entry into the world of work must rest squarely on our educational institutions. As a result, the "world of

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schooling" and the "workd of work" have been two quite different worlds. Is it any wonder that our youth have had trouble making the transition from the world of schooling to the world of work? Is it any wonder that adults needing occupational re-training have had trouble making the transition from the world of work to the world of schooling? It is time to quit asking such questions and to start moving toward some constructive solutions.

Needed solutions do not, in my opinion, lie in "fine-tuning" either world through making minor modifications. Instead, it seems to me we need to work together to create a "third world" for youth - a world in which educational institutions and the business-labor-industry community interact collaboratively to provide an encironment, a set of learning experiences, and a set of opportunities for helping all persons in our society - adults as well as youth - women as well as men - high school dropouts as well as college graduates - the poor as well as the affluent - make a successful transition from the world of schooling to the world of paid employment.

To me, the career education movement represents the kind of "third world" environment that is so badly needed today. Career education's primary focus is on increasing the ability of individuals to recognize and capitalize on relationships between education and work in our society. It places equal emphasis on society's need for work in increasing productivity and on the individual's need to find personal meaning and meaningfulness in the work she or he does. It balances the law of microeconomics which, in effect, says "there ain't no free lunch" with the law of macroeconomics which, in effect, says "in the long run, we're all dead". In so doing, it rests its basic strategies of conceptualization around the principles of career development.

It assumes that, unlike earlier educational concepts, career education is not something that the schools can do by themselves. Rather, at its basic roots, the career education movement has been pictured as a collaborative effort of the formal educational system, the business-labor-industry-professional-government community, and the home and family structure.

To discuss this "third world" environment represented by career education, it will first be necessary to discuss some "bed rock" principles concerning both work and career development. Second, it will be necessary to discuss briefly some basic steps in career development where this "third world" environment is needed.

Work and Careers

When I visit Boston, I try to spend some time in the old graveyard on the Boston Commons. There, on tombstone after tombstone, I can find three facts inscribed - the name of the person, age at time of death, and occupation. It is obvious, when one thinks about that period and reads those inscriptions, how each - cobbler, lamp maker, teacher, lawyer, etc. - contributed, through work, to the society of the time. More important, to me, it is obvious that work was a meaningful part of the person's lifestyle. It is easy for me to phantasize about lifestyles and the great meaning of work in that early American society. As I do so, I always have a great feeling of sadness that work, as a part of one's personal identification, no longer holds great personal meaning for many American citizens.

Please do not misunderstand what I am trying to say here. I am not pleading or wishing for a return to a kind of occupational society that existed in simpler times. If we inscribed gravestones with occupations

today, we would need very large stones indeed simply to record the variety of occupational changes that can be expected to occur for most persons today. We would also have to inscribe the graves of women with considerably more than the words "wife and mother". No, I am not pleading for a return to a simpler society nor to a rebirth of the classic form of the Protestant work ethic. Those days are past. As we live in the present, we must look to the future. But, as we do so with a time perspective, there are some valuable observations to be made regarding work and life.

Work, in such a time perspective, is more properly regarded as a human right than as a societal obligation. When I use the word "work", I am (with some technical restrictions not necessary to specify here) speaking about conscious effort aimed at producing benefits for oneself and/or for oneself and others. When any of us face squarely the question "Who am I?" we discover that, to a very large degree, the answer we give is stated in terms of our accomplishments - our achievements - things that we have done during our lifetime. When we face the even more personal question of "Why am I?", we find this to be even more true. Each of us is best known to ourselves and to others through the work we do and have done. Each of us finds our greatest sense of self worth through the personal and societal benefits we are able to produce as a result of our efforts - through our work.

I am speaking here of a basic human need of all human beings. It is a need that is just as real in 1974 as it was in 1774. It is a need to do, a need to be useful, and a need to be used. Former President Lyndon B. Johnson put it well when, in one of his speeches, he said "To hunger for use and to go unused is the greatest hunger of all."

If this, then, is what is meant by "work" as a human right, then it is

important to define "career" as the totality of work one does in her or his lifetime. With this definition, it is obvious that each of us has only one career. For most persons, her or his career begins considerably prior to the pre-school years and extends well into the retirement years. During one's career, there are, and increasingly will be, several changes in jobs, positions, and even occupations. But one does not change one's career. Rather, one's career evolves and develops throughout one's lifetime and, in the process, serves as the clearest and most obvious way in which each of us can answer the two questions of "Who am I?" and "Why am I?".

In the sense I have been defining "work" here, it is clear that many thousands of people who have found jobs in today's occupational society have not found "work". Instead, they have found what must more properly be known as "labor" - as largely involuntary effort to produce something - be it goods or services - which, while supposedly of some value to others, holds little or no personal meaningfulness or sense of real accomplishment or real purpose for the individual. To meet their personal needs for work, they must look to activities in which they engage during their leisure time. They endure, rather than enjoy, their jobs. Productivity declines. Worker dissatisfaction increases. Neither employer or employee is happy.

Current efforts to humanize the work place are, at best, means of correcting this situation. They are not basic ways of preventing its occurrence in the future. A long range positive and preventive approach will demand that we face squarely the increasingly close relationships between education and work that exist in today's occupational society. If we do this, we find many workers whose jobs underutilize their talents, offer little or no challenge, and lead to boredom. We find many others who because they

lack specific skills, find they cannot meet employer expectations and so are frustrated. Whether the condition is one of boredom or frustration, the result is the same - i.e., worker alienation.

Education, and relationships between education and work, is right in the middle of this dilemma. As a result, we hear people speaking of "overeducated" and "undereducated" workers. Such over-simplified expressions, by themselves, do not point the way toward positive change. The way toward change can only be found by considering problems of career development facing youth in terms of the potential that the "third world" of career education holds for helping youth - and adults - solve such problems in today's society.

Societal Needs and Career Development

There are four areas of societal and individual need to consider within the framework of career development. Each will be discussed very briefly.

First, the current rapidity of occupational change demands that both youth and adults be equipped with adaptability skills. Two broad classes of adaptability skills - (a) basic academic skills; and (b) good work habits - are prime concerns of the career education movement.

By basic academic skills, I mean what, in common terms, is often referred to as "reading, writing, and arithmetic" - the basic communication and mathematical skills that are prerequisite to learning specific vocational skills for large numbers of occupations. Career education seeks to increase the student's motivation for learning such skills through making clear both the need for and the necessity of such skills in today's world of work. Too many students, and too many teachers, seem to be caught in a "school for schooling's sake" syndrome at all levels of education. The only reason they

can see for going to school is so that they can ready themselves for still more schooling. Students ask their teachers "What good will it do me to learn this?" and teachers too often answer by saying "You will need it for classes to take next year." As a result, student motivation for learning and teacher motivation for teaching declines. When this happens, academic achievement also declines and, when students leave school for the world of paid employment, employers complain that they (the students) can't read, write, or calculate at a level that will make them productive workers.

Career education seeks to turn this situation around by making education, as preparation for work, both a prominent and a permanent goal of all who learn. For this to occur, both employers and employees in the world of work outside of education must be active participants in the educational process. Many elementary school teachers, like their students, simply do not know how the skills they teach are utilized in the world of paid employment. The same can be said of many teachers at the secondary and at the collegiate levels. To remedy this deficiency, career education asks that persons from the world of work outside of education be willing to serve as resource persons in classrooms and to open up the work place for student and educator observation. Students in our schools today need to learn from persons who have been through the "school of hard knocks" as well as from those who have been through the "school of hard books".

A conscious effort, beginning in the early elementary school and continuing through all of formal education, to teach good work habits is a second essential adaptability skill of concern to career education. By "work habits", we are not speaking of "work values" - of personal reasons why a particular individual would make career decisions. Rather, we are speaking

only about those basic work habits which, over the years, have been identified as clearly related to productivity.

Let me put it in the most direct possible terms. We want all students to learn to try - to do their best at any assignment - to begin their work on time - to finish their work assignments before stopping - to cooperate with their fellow workers - and to recognize the interdependence of various workers and so the necessity for someone who directs and/or supervises others. If youth first become aware of the nature and importance of good work habits only when they leave schooling for the world of paid employment, it is too late. Such work habits, if they are to become a part of the person, must be consciously taught beginning in the early elementary school. To be fully effective, they must be reenforced in the home and family structure. Thus, this is one way in which the home and family become part of the collaborative effort known as career education. Good work habits, as adaptability skills, are fully as essential as are the basic academic skills.

Second, each student, at whatever point she or he leaves the formal educational system for the world of paid employment, needs one or more sets of specific vocational skills that can be used to gain entry into today's labor market. For some students, such skills will have to be learned at the secondary school level. Increasingly, many others will be learning such skills at the postsecondary, sub-baccalaureate degree level. Thousands will continue to seek acquisition of such skills at the undergraduate and/or graduate levels in our institutions of higher education. The beginnings of such specific skills, for all students, must be found in the secondary school experience. English, for the prospective writer, is vocational skills training just as much as machine shop is vocational skill training for the

prospective machinist. We need to rid ourselves of the false notion that, in our secondary schools, some students are getting ready to work while others are getting ready for college. Too many students have, in the past, gone to college instead of going to work. With no clear vocational goals, many have learned, while in college, much more about how to enjoy life than about how to pay for it. Career education seeks to insert, at every level of education from the secondary school through the graduate college, a recognition of the need for and the importance of using education as a means of acquiring entry level vocational skills.

If this goal is to be implemented in a meaningful fashion, it will mean a sizeable increase in vocational-technical education at both the secondary and the postsecondary school levels. It will also mean an increase in work experience and work-study programs for both college and noncollege bound students beginning in the high school and continuing throughout all of higher education. We simply cannot expect that all, or even most, of the skills required for entry into the world of paid employment can be simulated or taught only within the school setting. The job-seeking, job-getting, and job-holding skills needed in today's society are an essential part of these basic vocational skills. Participation of the business-labor-industry community with educational personnel will be essential if today's students are to acquire such skills.

Third, career decision-making skills are absolutely essential in a society, such as ours, that worships, above all else, freedom of choice for each individual. A common mistake that is made is one of thinking about career decision-making as though it occurred at only one point in time. It is essential to recognize that this is a developmental process. As such, it

includes career awareness, career motivation, career exploration, the making of a wide variety of career choices, career preparation, career entry, and career progression.

Career awareness is the starting point. I am convinced that many of today's youth have not rejected work. Rather, in effect, they have never heard of it - except in a negative fashion described as "labor". They have never seen it, touched it, smelled it, or done it. Many have no realistic concept of the nature of the world of work - nor even the name or nature of their parents' occupations. This is illustrated by a little boy I heard about who asked his mother why his Daddy always brought home a whole briefcase full of papers to work on at night. When the mother replies by explaining that "Daddy can't get all his work done at the office," the little boy replied by asking, "Well, why don't they put him in a slower group?"

To correct this situation, youth need to be exposed, during the early elementary school years, to a broad overview of the nature of the world of paid employment. Such a view is one designed to make children aware that a wide variety of kinds of work exist and are needed in our society, that people work for differing reasons, and that our occupational society is an orderly place in terms of relationships between various broad occupational classifications. For this to occur, the collaborative efforts of both the business-labor-industry community and the home and family will be required.

To become aware of the general nature of the world of paid employment is one thing. To consider how one might choose to occupy a particular place in that world is quite a different thing. Awareness must be followed by exploration - with a searching for how one's interests, talents, and values can be utilized in ways leading to occupational decisions that are satisfying

to the individual and beneficial to society. For such decisions to be made hurriedly, or at only one particular point in time is both dangerous and upsetting. Youth need "tryout" experiences that will allow them to experience something of what it would be like if they chose a particular field or classification of work. Such "tryout" experiences, if they are to be realistic, must include experiences in the real world of paid employment. For many students, the junior high school years are good times for this kind of experience. For many others, particularly the college-bound, such "tryout" experiences should continue through the senior high school years and into part of the undergraduate experience on a college campus.

The making of specific career decisions demands that each person answer, for herself or himself, three questions: (a) What is important to me?; (b) What is possible for me?; and (c) What is probably for me? To answer such questions, in terms of one's entire future, is increasingly impossible in these times of rapid change. The certainty of uncertainty is what faces most young people today. At the same time, a reality of the moment and the short-run future always exists. It is a reality that can, with the collaborative efforts of the formal education system and the business-labor-industry community, be communicated to our youth. If such information regarding educational and occupational opportunities available for choice are combined with the personal understandings of interests, aptitudes, and values gained from the collaborative experiences offered by career education, each youth will have a wider and more informed basis for personal career decision making. Remember, a reasoned pattern of career decisions for each youth is what we seek - not necessarily decisions that seem reasonable to us. For this to happen, considerable strengthening of career guidance and

counseling must take place in our educational institutions. Part of this strengthening must come from the resources - both personal and physical - of the business-labor-industry community and the home and family structure.

Work Values

Finally, a few words about the nature and importance of work values is in order. No matter how much help is provided in career awareness, career exploration, career preparation, or career decision-making based on a combination of self and occupational information, the very personal question of "WHY SHOULD I WORK?" remains for each individual. Answers to this question can be viewed from an economic, a sociological, or a psychological base. Each individual can be expected to use these three bases, singly or in some combination, for answering this most personal question. As they do, some will find themselves choosing to utilize their work values in unpaid work - for example, as a volunteer worker, as a full-time homemaker, or in work done as part of their leisure time. Many others will want to answer this question in terms of the setting in which they spend their greatest number of waking hours - their work place in the world of paid employment.

If work values are to be meaningful in the world of paid employment, it must be possible for workers to exercise them in that world. This, of course, is the general topic of humanization of the work place and one that cannot be discussed here. I mention it simply to illustrate that, if the career education efforts I have been speaking about here are to be initiated, this topic cannot be ignored.

Concluding Remarks

Let me conclude by stating, in the most simple and direct terms possible, the goals of the career education movement. In a societal sense, these goals can be stated by saying that we want every individual in these United States to: (a) want to work; (b) acquire the skills necessary to work in these times; and (c) engage in work that is satisfying to the individual and beneficial to society. In an individualistic sense, we want work - (true work, not labor) - to become (a) possible; (b) meaningful; and (c) satisfying for each individual.

These goals are ones that cannot be met if only our formal educational system is working toward them. They will demand the kinds of collaborative efforts and dedication that I have been talking about in this paper. Both the individuals in our society and the larger society itself badly need these kinds of collaborative efforts. They need them now.